

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-4 in their entirety without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter set forth therein and add new claims 5-16 as follows.

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Cancelled)

5. (New) A method of determining a halftone area in image data, said method comprising:

a first step of determining whether or not each pixel in said image data is an edge pixel;

a second step of determining whether each pixel in said image data is a halftone pixel or a non-halftone pixel, according to a predetermined algorithm based on the result of said first step; and

a third step of correcting the result of the second step by changing a non-halftone pixel which is continuous to the halftone pixel determined at the second step or a halftone pixel previously corrected at the third step and has a density equal to or higher than a threshold density, to a halftone pixel.

6. (New) A method of distinguishing halftone pixels from non-halftone pixels in image data, said method comprising:

a first step of determining whether each pixel in said image data is an edge pixel or not;

a second step of determining whether each pixel in said image data is a halftone pixel or a non-halftone pixel, according to a predetermined algorithm based on the result of said first step; and

a third step of correcting the result of the second step, including the steps of:

setting a reference region having a predetermined size and including at least a non-halftone pixel;

counting a number of the halftone pixels determined at the second step and halftone pixels previously corrected at the third step within said reference region; and

if the counted number is larger than a threshold number and said non-halftone pixel has a density equal to or higher than a threshold density, changing said non-halftone pixel to a halftone pixel.

7. (New) An apparatus for determining a halftone area in image data, comprising:

edge detecting means which detects whether each pixel in said image data is an edge pixel or not;

halftone pixel determining means which determines whether each pixel is a halftone pixel or a non-halftone pixel according to a predetermined algorithm based on the result obtained by said edge detecting means; and

redetermining means which corrects the result obtained from said halftone pixel determining means by changing a non-halftone pixel which is continuous to the halftone pixel determined by said halftone pixel determining means or a halftone pixel previously corrected by the redetermining means and has a density equal to or higher than a threshold density, to a halftone pixel.

8. (New) An apparatus for determining a halftone area in image data, comprising:

edge detecting means which detects whether each pixel in said image data is an edge pixel or not;

halftone pixel determining means which determines whether each pixel is a halftone pixel or a non-halftone pixel according to a predetermined algorithm based on the result obtained by said edge detecting means; and

redetermining means which corrects the result obtained from said halftone pixel determining means by:

setting a reference region having a predetermined size and including at least a non-halftone pixel; counting a number of the halftone pixels determined by said halftone pixel determining means and halftone pixels previously corrected by said redetermining means within said reference region; and if the counted number is larger than a threshold number and said non-halftone pixel has a density equal to or higher than a threshold density, changing said non-halftone pixel to a halftone pixel.

9. (New) The method according to claim 5,

wherein, in said third step, the result of said second step is corrected by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from left to right and a direction from right to left, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.

10. (New) The method according to claim 6,

wherein, in said third step, the result of said second step is corrected by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from left to right and a direction from right to left, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.

11. (New) The method according to claim 5,

wherein, in said third step, the result of said second step is corrected by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from top to bottom and a direction from bottom to top, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.

12. (New) The method according to claim 6,

wherein, in said third step, the result of said second step is corrected by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from top to bottom and a direction from bottom to top, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.

13. (New) The apparatus according to claim 7,

wherein said redetermining means corrects the result obtained by said halftone pixel determining means by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from left to right and a direction from right to left, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.

14. (New) The apparatus according to claim 8,

wherein said redetermining means corrects the result obtained by said halftone pixel determining means by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from left to right

and a direction from right to left, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.

15. (New) The apparatus according to claim 7,

wherein said redetermining means corrects the result obtained by said halftone pixel determining means by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from top to bottom and a direction from bottom to top, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.

16. (New) The apparatus according to claim 8,

wherein said redetermining means corrects the result obtained by said halftone pixel determining means by firstly scanning said image data in one of a direction from top to bottom and a direction from bottom to top, and then, secondary scanning said image data in a reverse direction of the firstly scanning.